



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement at the Ministerial Council

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
at the OSCE Ministerial Council
Kyiv, Ukraine, December 6, 2013

At this significant moment for Ukraine, you have hosted and led us through a productive Ministerial. Allow me to comment on some of the progress we've made together, as well as a few missed opportunities.

The Ministerial Council sent a strong message of support for the work of the Minsk Group co-chairs and Armenia and Azerbaijan toward a just and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

We welcome the Ministerial statement relating to the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova, even though it does not address all the issues relevant to this Organization's work to promote a political settlement of the conflict, since it is focused exclusively on the 5+2 talks. We need to continue to focus on Summit commitments relating to Russian military withdrawal from Moldova and the need to transform the current peacekeeping force into a genuinely multinational presence. Transnistrian authorities' reported efforts to limit the movements of OSCE mission personnel are unacceptable and unhelpful.

We should have had a statement on Georgia. As we meet, fences are being built to divide people rather than bring them together. Consideration of the protracted conflicts is not optional content for the annual meeting of OSCE Ministers -- development of a way ahead on Europe's protracted conflicts should be in the forefront of our work, now and in the future.

We welcome the update of the OSCE Principles Governing Non-proliferation, which reflects the great progress states have made in this sphere since the first version, and the Ministerial Decision on Small Arms and Light Weapons, that provides impetus to the important work of the OSCE to secure or reduce inventories of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. We regret, however, that participating States could not support a clear, direct call for the modernization of the OSCE's gold-standard collection of confidence and stability building mechanisms, the Vienna Document.

The U.S. worked very hard in chairing the informal working group that produced the first-ever cyber CBMs and we are committed to taking this work forward.

Though we are not making a declaration on Afghanistan at this Ministerial, the 2014 transition in Afghanistan still offers the opportunity to leverage the OSCE's expertise and field presences, and to build new models of cooperation to reinforce comprehensive security in the region.

In the last 10 years, the OSCE has emerged as the premier platform for partnership in fighting human trafficking—and the addendum to the action plan will pave the way for future success.

We are pleased that this Ministerial Council adopted two second dimension decisions. Energy, environmental and economic issues are clearly tied to issues of political and human security, and we are ready to do more work in this area.

We are pleased to add to the OSCE's established commitments on the fundamental freedom of religion and belief. This will complement efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination throughout the OSCE space.

The adoption of a draft decision on Roma and Sinti is timely given the unfortunate uptick in violence against Roma, as well as hateful rhetoric from political leaders. Ten years after the original OSCE-wide action plan on Roma and Sinti, we welcome this renewed focus.

In many parts of the OSCE region, journalists have been threatened, beaten or even killed because of the work they do on-line and off-line, because they exercised their freedom of expression. I am particularly disappointed that the Russian Federation was the only delegation unable to join consensus on the Chairmanship's last draft of a decision on protection of journalists. That was, in my view, a missed opportunity for the Russian government to reaffirm its commitment to protect journalists in a country where many journalists, courageous people like Anna Politkovskaya, have been murdered.

The pioneering advancements of the OSCE over the past forty years did not come from one year to the next, and they did not come without opposition. Yet the principled and determined pursuit of comprehensive security by many participating States, and the inspiration OSCE commitments to universal principles gave to courageous citizens, ultimately shaped historic transitions and political progress.

The U.S. and others will continue to insist on the safety of journalists and defend freedom of expression. We will keep pressing for protections of human rights and fundamental freedoms on-line and off-line. We will keep defending embattled civil society. We will keep drawing the attention of the international community to human rights abuses. We will continue to work for the resolution of protracted conflicts. We will keep pushing to modernize the Vienna document and enhance regional security. We will keep supporting citizens in their fight against corruption and their quest for economic opportunities and jobs that come from open, free economies based on rule of law. We are motivated by the universal aspirations of individuals across the OSCE space to live in dignity, freedom, prosperity and security. We are committed for the long haul.

Colleagues, last night the world lost a hero whose patience, principle, and persistence inspired countless millions. Nelson Mandela's unshakeable confidence in universal values motivated his quest for justice and his leadership as the first democratically elected leader of his country. It is fitting that we in this hall, as we reflect on our commitments, remember him as someone who saw right so clearly and did so much to advance freedom and dignity for so many. As he said, "A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones." His life's work will continue to be an example to all of us.

As Assistant Secretary Nuland noted yesterday, this Ministerial comes at a historic moment. The eyes of the world are on Ukraine, and not because of the participants in this Ministerial, but because of the many thousands of people whose hope for a better future warms Maidan even as snow blankets the city. Many around this table have reflected on events here. They have called for the protection of rights and the rejection of violence. Some have talked about

how this Organization and the international community can support a way forward that reflects the aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

Civil society has also made recommendations about how the OSCE could help build trust needed for political progress, and asked all of us, including the Chairmanship, to support the OSCE's potential contributions on the ground.

The Ukrainian government will either meet Ukrainian citizens' demands for reform, justice and the chance to shape a future in partnership with Europe, or it will disappoint them. The United States continues to stand by the people of Ukraine and their aspirations for a European future with freedom, opportunity and prosperity.

President Yanukovich and other senior members of the government have pledged to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of Ukrainian citizens, and to investigate and bring to justice perpetrators of violations. Those promises must be kept - not just while citizens are demonstrating in streets and squares and ministers are gathered in Kyiv - but over the long term. I have heard from civil society their concerns that once ministers leave town, they will be more vulnerable. The world will be watching how the coming days and weeks unfold and will measure leaders by how they keep the promises they've made and fulfill their obligations to the Ukrainian people.

I would like once again to thank the Ukrainian Chair-in-Office for your hospitality, and to offer my thanks to you, Foreign Minister Kozhara, and your team and, of course, Ambassador Prokopchuk and his team for your tireless efforts over the last year.